

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (Original): In a center beam railcar comprising a deck, bulkheads at opposite ends of the railcar, and a center beam extending longitudinally of the railcar and including a center sill, a top chord, and an intermediate structure connecting the top chord and the center sill, the center beam having a height greater than or equal to that of the bulkhead, the improvement wherein the top chord has a width that is not substantially greater than the width of said intermediate structure.

Claim 2 (Original): The improvement of claim 1 wherein said top chord is of a generally rectangular, tubular configuration.

Claim 3 (Original): The improvement of claim 1 wherein said top chord is of generally square tubular configuration.

Claim 4 (Original): The improvement of claim 1 wherein said deck includes a depressed central portion.

Claim 5 (Original): The improvement of claim 4 wherein said railcar has a clear loading height of at least about 14 ft. above said depressed central portion of said deck.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The improvement of claim 4 wherein said railcar is capable of carrying at least about 110 tons of wood products having a density of about 30 lbs./cu. ft. in commercial rail service.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The improvement of claim 1 wherein the deck includes first and second end portions at a first elevation and a depressed central portion at a second elevation, each of the end portion having a length equal to an integral multiple of the length of a product to be carried by said deck.

Claim 8 (Original): The improvement of claim 7 wherein said first elevation is above said second elevation by a dimension approximately equal to the height of a product to be carried in said depressed central portion.

Claim 9 (Original): The improvement of claim 8 further comprising elongated flexible members for securing the lading, and longitudinally adjustable winches for securing said elongated flexible members.

Claim 10 (Original): The improvement of claim 9 wherein said railcar further comprises a pair of side sills, and wherein said winches are supported on one of the side sills, and the elongated flexible members are of sufficient length to extend from said winches over the lading and top chord to the opposite side sill when the car is fully loaded, and wherein said railcar further includes retaining means on the opposite side sill to secure the free ends of the elongated flexible members.

Claim 11 (Original): The improvement of claim 10 wherein said intermediate structure includes a plurality of posts, and further includes, at each end, one or more elongated structural supports connecting one or more of the posts to a respective one of the bulkheads, and wherein said elongated structural supports are not connected to the center sill or the top chord.

Claims 12-15 (Canceled).

Claim 16 (Original): In a center beam railcar having an elongated flexible member connected to the railcar to secure the lading on the railcar deck, the improvement comprising a longitudinally adjustable retainer to secure an end of the elongated flexible member to the railcar.

Claim 17 (Original): The improvement of claim 16 wherein said longitudinally adjustable retainer comprises a winch.

Claim 18 (Original): The improvement of claim 17 wherein said elongated flexible member comprises a 4 2 inch wide strap.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): In a center beam railcar comprising a center beam including a center sill, a top chord, and a plurality of posts extending between the center sill and the top chord, a pair of bulkheads at opposite ends of the center beam, and one or more load-supporting surfaces between the bulkheads, the improvement comprising one or more structural supports not connected to said center sill or to said top chord.

Claim 20 (Original): The improvement of claim 19 wherein each of said one or more structural supports extends substantially horizontally between said bulkhead and said one or more posts.

Claim 21 (New): The improvement of claim 1 wherein the top extremity of the center beam, opposite the center sill of the center beam, lacks structure having a width substantially greater than the width of said intermediate structure.

Claim 22 (New): A center beam railcar capable of carrying a load of material, comprising:

a deck supporting said load,

bulkheads at opposite ends of the railcar, and

a center beam connected to each bulkhead, said center beam acting as a principal load-bearing structural support for the car to support the weight of the car and the load,

said center beam comprising a center sill, a top chord, and an intermediate structure connecting the top chord and the center sill and assisting substantially in supporting the top chord against buckling in a horizontal plane, said intermediate structure comprising a plurality of vertical posts and diagonal members,

said top chord, vertical posts and diagonal braces contributing substantially to the strength of the center beam, and thus to the weight-carrying capacity of the car,

    said top chord bearing substantial compression loads and having sufficient strength, stiffness and durability for long term usage in commercial rail transport,

    said top chord being free of any structure protruding substantially beyond the width of said intermediate structure to permit the load to be stacked against the center beam and alongside the top chord,

    said deck including first and second end portions at a first elevation and a depressed central portion at a second elevation,

    said railcar having a clear loading height of at least about 14 ft. above said depressed central portion of said deck, said railcar being capable of carrying at least about 110 tons of products having a density of about 30 lbs./cu. ft.,

    said railcar having an unloaded weight of not greater than about 70,000 lbs.